

Jennifer Renteria

ELA Period: 7-8

October 18, 2016

### The Power of Persistence

Failure. People seem to look at it in a dissatisfactory way, but they should really look at it as a reminder to not give up. In the fictional short story, “Flowers for Algernon,” by Daniel Keyes, the main character, Charlie Gordon is a determined, hard-working man with a mental illness who is persistent in trying to find out a way to become intelligent. He feels that it is necessary to be like all the other “smart” people and to also have the same capacity of learning as them. Persistence is necessary to overcome challenges over time. This theme over is shown through Charlie’s journey in the exposition when Charlie tries very hard to become smart; rising action, when he wants to fit in with others; and in the climax of the story, Charlie realizes through Algernon, the little mouse, that their intelligence decreases over time.

In the beginning, Charlie Gordon tries his best to become a smart, agile person. He wants to become smart so much he wants to know any way to do it. He feels that he is very dumb because he is not like other people, “I said I askd pepul and sumbody told me where I shud go to lern to read and spell good”(286). He used his communication skills to figure out a way to find someone that was willing to help him with his mental illness. Since Charlie lives in a world where he feels the need to feel like he belongs, where if you have a mental illness you are already labeled different. Charlie is persistent in trying to fit in this perfect, faultless society. Charlie is a very literal person that is why he can’t figure out what is on the inkblot cards, “I tried hard but I still couldnt find picturs I only saw the ink”(285). The test that Charlie took was the

Rorschach test. It is a test which consists of ink on cards that displays what people view emotionally in the inkblot cards. Charlie didn't see anything because he is a literal person who views the world as it is. When he saw the inkblots he literally just saw ink on cards. This shows how Charlie can become an open-minded person, he just needs time because in the story he shows his persistence in wanting to learn how to read and write.

Leading in, Charlie always wanted to conform with common people. Charlie wants to be like all of his friends, "Everybody laughed and we had a good time and they gave me lots of drinks and Joe said Charlie is a card when he's potted. I don't know what that means but everybody likes me and we had fun. I can't wait to be smart like my best friends Joe Carp and Frank Reilly" (290). Charlie does not understand that his "friends" are not really helping him, but his mental illness does not let him see that. He is so persistent in wanting to be like the society he does not notice that those "friends" are his bullies. After the operation Charlie realized that he was like everyone, laughing at people with mental disabilities because they were different, "As his vacant eyes moved across the crowd of amused onlookers, he slowly mirrored their smiles and finally broke into an uncertain grin at the joke which he obviously did not understand" (299). Charlie sees himself when he saw the boy and how the boy just wants to fit in but is vulnerable to the world. Charlie thinks that intelligence is know how to read and write like other men that if he had those skills he would be accomplished. Over time, like after the operation, he realized that he was just like everyone else. He learned that because the boy has a mental illness everybody thought it was funny to make fun of him and laugh at him. He is so persistent in trying to become like other he was doing the same bullying as Frank and Joe were.

At last, Charlie realizes through Algernon, the little mouse, that their intelligence decreases over time. Charlie was researching day and night to find an answer to what is happening to Algernon, "I've got to find the reason for the sharp regression in Algernon. I've got to know if and when it will happen to me" (301). Charlie knows that he had the same operation as Algernon. Charlie becoming smart is something significant and he doesn't want to pass up that huge opportunity. He does not want to become the naive person he was before. So he is very persistent in trying to find out why Algernon is going back to his old state. When Algernon died Charlie felt as if his whole world crumbled apart, "But if I try and practice very hard maybe I'll get a little smarter and know what all the words are" (306). Since Charlie had the same operation as Algernon he reverted back to his old self. Charlie understood the importance of how to use the intelligence he once had. Charlie wanted so bad to find a cure that he forgot himself. This change impacted him because he realized if he ever gets back to that level of intelligence he should use to do something that really impacts the world in a positive way. Now Charlie has to use his persistence to obtain back to the level he was before and try to use his intelligence for something that makes a difference in the world.

In Conclusion, persistence is important because Charlie never gave up when he was trying to become intelligent. Persistence over time is shown through Charlie's journey in the exposition when Charlie tries very hard to become smart; rising action, when he wants to fit in with others; and in the climax of the story, Charlie realizes through Algernon, the little mouse, that their intelligence decreases over time. Without persistence, society would give up and go to a parallel level where they can easily achieve a goal. It is important because it teaches the readers to not abandon a challenge when they have a downfall. When you fail at a challenge you should

not give up, on the contrary, you should try hard to reach that goal and even go beyond it.

Anything can be achieved if you are persistent and give it some time.